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## THE PRESERVATION OF NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

By J. G. DE ROULHAC HAMILTON

Throughout the life of North Carolina, colony and state, there has been on the part of the great majority of her people a most careless attitude towards the various sorts of material from which the fabric of historical record must be woven. Individualistic, lacking the self-consciousness which has been so characteristic of the people of New England, indifferent to the past and not over regardful of the future, North Carolinians have paid little heed to the preservation of personal and family records such as letters and business papers of all kinds, and even of bare genealogical details. Very rarely have diaries been kept and when they have been, they were usually destroyed as either lacking historical value or else as being of too personal a nature for public inspection.

The same disregard has appeared in their attitude toward public archives, and this in spite of the fact that there were constant efforts on the part of those in authority, from the beginning of government to establish some sort of system of preserving the records of marriages, births, and deaths, the laws passed by the colonial assemblies, their journals, a roster of land grants, of all that body of official documents which grow out of the operation of government, however simple in character that government may be.

The lack of a fixed seat of government meant, of course, constant loss of records in their transfer from officer to officer—and even more in failure of transfer; in their constant transportation from place to place, and into private homes unsuited for their proper storage and

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<sup>1</sup> The material for this paper was secured chiefly from Dr. Weeks, *Historical Review of the Colonial and State Records*, and from the biennial reports of the North Carolina Historical Commission. My acknowledgments are due also to Mr. R. D. W. Connor, Mr. R. B. House, and Mr. A. R. Newsome for information.

security. The indifference of the average custodian as to their safety was exceeded only by that of the people at large.

In 1738 a law was passed, however, for the erection of "a sufficient gaol and office place for the safe keeping of records of the General Court" at Edenton, but apparently none was ever built. In 1740 the Assembly complained of the moving of the records to the home of the secretary on the Cape Fear, and asked the governor "to have a care" for them. Governor Johnston in the same year complained that they were so dispersed that he was frequently compelled "to send from one end of the province to another for them." As a result an attempt was made by law to provide for "the better security and safe keeping of the records" of the counties, but the law was disallowed by the Crown on the protest of the Secretary who kept "one of the secretary's offices in his own house near Brunswick, a second office . . . in Edenton, and a third in New Bern, and a fourth in Edgecombe County." Seven years later Johnston urged the preservation of records as a reason for selecting a fixed and permanent capital, and there erecting public buildings. The Assembly agreed—and did nothing.

Governor Dobbs in 1754 renewed the complaint, asserting that "for want of proper places to keep the offices in and to preserve records upon account of the changeable state of this Province, whenever a Receiver General, Surveyor General, or Auditor dies, all papers die with them, for the successors say they have got no papers, or if any, those very insignificant from their Predecessors." Six years later he provoked the Assembly by removing the books and records to Wilmington. In 1768 the clerk of the Assembly reporting that "for want of a proper place for disposing and safe keeping the papers, journal books, etc., of the Assembly, several in part are eaten by rats and mice and some totally destroyed," the Assembly ordered them kept at one office in New Bern. The law was not obeyed; but with the completion of the Governor's Palace, in 1771, all the records in sight were carried there. Of course many remained elsewhere.

After 1760 wills were recorded in the several counties. Court-houses, however, were rare, and in a sense this multiplied the evils already described. Fire, too, destroyed in the course of time the records of Onslow, Bladen, Hertford, New Hanover, Richmond, Gates, Duplin, Pitt, Pasquotank, Washington, and twenty-three

other counties. One county lost three courthouses and their contents. And where fire did not destroy, the carelessness of man was almost as harmful.

Spasmodically, and always from purely practical, utilitarian considerations, the State of North Carolina, in its early years of independence took steps to save a part of its records, particularly those relating to land grants and patents. In addition certain counties were allowed to take similar steps. But nowhere in these early years is there manifest any recognition of obligation to preserve historical material or even of the importance of such material.

In the latter years of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th three persons, working unofficially, somewhat stimulated interest by undertaking to write a history of the State. Hugh Williamson and Francois Xavier Martin each wrote and published two volumes. Archibald D. Murphey's pretentious plan never went any further than a brief outline. All three collected a considerable amount of material from individuals and thus facilitated its loss by the State. Williamson's and Martin's material vanished and only a part of Murphey's was finally salvaged.

On the other side, it must be admitted that all, and particularly Murphey, played a part in arousing interest in the question and in stimulating State action. The Legislature of 1826-1827 passed the following resolution, introduced by John Scott of Hillsboro and doubtless written by Murphey:

That his Excellency the Governor of the State be requested to make a respectful application to the British Government for liberty to procure, for the use of the State, from the office of the Board of Trade and Plantations, in London, copies of such papers and documents as relate to the Colonial history of North Carolina.

*Resolved further,* That the application aforesaid be made through the American Minister in London, and that he be requested to lend his aid to carry the foregoing resolution into effect, and to obtain for the agent who may be employed in this service the necessary facilities of procuring such copies.

The only immediate result of the resolution was that permission was obtained from the British government for the copies to be made in England, and the preparation of an "Index to Colonial Documents Relative to North Carolina." No other action was taken for several years. The legislature in 1831 grew excited about the re-

ported Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and appointed a committee to investigate and report, at the same time providing for the printing of their report with the accompanying documents, and also of the Journal of the Provincial Congress of 1776 and the Proceedings of the Cumberland Association. In that year the capitol was destroyed by fire and a great deal of valuable documentary material was lost as well as all the printed assembly journals and private acts.

In 1843, through the influence of Colonel John H. Wheeler, the State Treasurer, the "Index of Colonial Documents" was printed by the State. Wheeler was then engaged in the preparation of his *Sketches of North Carolina*, and through the aid of the Index was able to have a number of documents copied. The Index aroused interest and in 1844 Governor Morehead in his message suggested sending an agent to London to have the papers copied. The Legislature was shy at such a suggestion, but passed a resolution authorizing the Governor to collect the papers necessary to complete the series of Governor's letter books and have them copied and arranged. The resolution also authorized him to obtain so far as was possible, the original papers or copies of the proceedings of the town, county, and district committees, and councils of safety of the Revolutionary period. Slowly the State was moving to action.

In the same year, D. L. Swain, then President of the University, announced the formation of the North Carolina Historical Society at the University. Its purpose was thus stated:

This Society has been established, first, for the purpose of endeavoring to excite such interest in the public mind, in regard to the history of the State, as may induce the Legislature to adopt early and efficient measures, to obtain from England the most interesting documents in relation to the Regal Government, together with such papers as may be found to reflect light upon the obscure history of the Proprietary Government of Carolina; and secondly, to collect, arrange and preserve at the University, as nearly as may be possible, one or more copies of every book, pamphlet, and newspaper published in this state since the introduction of the press among us in 1749; all books published without the State, in our own or foreign countries, on the history of Carolina, and, especially, all the records, documents and papers to be found within the State that may tend to elucidate the history of the American Revolution.

Through this agency, or, to be exact, through Swain who was the society, a large and valuable collection of historical documents was

made, "undoubtedly the largest and most valuable collection of colonial and revolutionary manuscript material ever gathered by an individual in the history of the State." Many of these letters, however, Swain gave away to collectors, and when he died the whole collection was mixed with his own books and papers. His wife laid claim to them as his personal property, and notwithstanding the fact that the bulk of them were listed in the printed catalogue of the Historical Society, she was allowed to retain them. A large collection of valuable autograph letters were sold; but later Mrs. Swain turned over a considerable portion of the collection to the University of North Carolina, and her executor, years afterwards, gave the remainder to the North Carolina Historical Commission.

Swain placed at the disposal of Governor Graham, who had succeeded Morehead, the Thomas Burke papers which he had secured from James Webb of Hillsboro, and which contained much of his correspondence while governor. Governor Graham's report to the Legislature of 1846-1847, telling of the value of the letters of Caswell, Nash and Burke, there found, excited so much interest that the Legislature passed a resolution authorizing him to collect, arrange, and publish a new edition of the pamphlet on the Mecklenburg Declaration, the journals of the provincial congresses and the committees of safety, the journal of the Board of War, and the documents of the provincial congresses, the provincial council, and the council of safety, "and such other documents as may be illustrative of the early history of North Carolina."

Nothing was accomplished under the resolution, but the Legislature of 1848-1849, after hearing read a letter of George Bancroft to Swain, on the North Carolina records in England, passed a resolution empowering the Governor to secure copies of them and to expend if necessary one thousand dollars for the purpose. To appreciate fully the significance of this act, one must recall the fact not only of North Carolina's oft-boasted economical strain, but also that one thousand dollars was a very respectable sum of money in that day.

Governor Manly now asked Swain to undertake the task as agent for the State. The latter agreed, stipulating that he must first ascertain what documents were to be found in the State. Governor Manly reported his action to the next Legislature which ordered the printing of the journals of the Assembly of 1715, and of the assem-

blies from 1754 to 1775, the council records from 1734 to 1740 and from 1764 to the Revolution, and the journals of the provincial congresses from 1776 to 1789. In 1815, the muster rolls of North Carolina soldiers in the War of 1812 were also ordered to be printed, but in neither case was anything done.

In 1855 the Legislature passed a resolution authorizing Swain as agent for the State to visit London and have the documents copied, providing for all expenses and the hire of a clerk. It also authorized the copying of Governor Tryon's North Carolina papers in the Library of Harvard College.

Governor Swain in the following two years reëstablished contact with the British Public Records Office and began to plan a systematic collection of material. In 1857 he sent out a circular letter which contained the following statement of his purposes:

. . . It is my purpose to secure the possession, as nearly as may be practicable, of every species of documentary evidence essential to the true and full development of our history, which has been preserved in our own, in our sister states, and in the mother country.

. . . I desire to obtain all the information within your reach which may serve to illustrate the history of the State, or your own country, viz: Accounts of the various Indian tribes, which have at any time, inhabited our territory, their wars among themselves, and their contests with the white people;—records of associations and accounts of other proceedings to resist the execution of the Stamp Act;—records of town, county and district associations organized under the Articles of American Association, adopted in 1774;—of revolutionary Committees of Safety;—Journals of Provincial and Revolutionary Conventions, Congresses and Assemblies, either printed or in manuscript;—Court records, especially of trials for treason;—Parish and Church Registers;—records of births, death and marriages;—files and single numbers of ancient newspapers, pamphlets, books;—accounts of early settlements, discoveries and inventions;—accounts of battles, descriptions of battle-fields and fortifications;—epistolary correspondence, and in fine everything which, in your estimation may possess historical value.

Let me entreat you, moreover, in addition to the early collections indicated in the foregoing paragraph, to prepare, or secure the services of a competent person, to prepare a sketch of the history of your county.

In the meantime he had associated with himself in the work Rev. Francis L. Hawks, a former reporter of the Supreme Court of the State, who in the preparation of his history of North Carolina had become deeply absorbed in the subject. In 1858 they jointly memorialized the Legislature, proposing to prepare, under State auspices, a "Documentary History of North Carolina" and communi-

cating the pleasing intelligence that George Bancroft had offered to place at the disposal of the State his entire collection of papers bearing on its history. They also suggested the publication of the North Carolina Statutes at Large.

The Legislature, by now educated to the importance of the work, at once authorized the Governor to make the suggested arrangement. Copying was begun, but the Civil War intervened. The Legislature of 1860-1861 ordered the printing of the Legislative journals which had been authorized in 1851, but before it could be begun the convention of 1861 ordered it suspended.

The period of Civil War and reconstruction saw the people of North Carolina too much absorbed in the difficult and, in this instance, heartbreaking task of making history, to pay much attention to the preservation of records of the past. But they emerged from the struggles of the period with a new vision and an enlarged conception of the meaning of history, and the task of those who sought to care for the past was never again so difficult.

Governor Jarvis, in an address to the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, gave a delightful account of how the work on the records was begun anew. Colonel F. A. Olds, who has done so much to preserve the relics of the past, was the indirect cause, by a sort of unconscious reverse English, as it were, of this revival. As Quartermaster General of the State Guard he longed with all the eagerness of his ardent nature for the use of the arsenal in Capitol Square for its legal purposes, and sought permission from Governor Jarvis to throw away the debris and trash there stored. Among this "was more than a wagon-load of old papers, documents, and manuscripts of all sorts." The Governor referred the matter to Colonel William L. Saunders, the Secretary of State, who found in the pile the original manuscript journal of the Halifax Convention which framed the Constitution of 1776.

Some days later Colonel Saunders asked the Governor if some way could not be devised to enable him to collect and put together the colonial records. Governor Jarvis, after consideration, asked him to write a simple resolution authorizing the trustees of the State Library to collect and publish them. Colonel Saunders drew a bill and the Governor mentioned the matter to several members of the Legislature and one of them, Hon. Theodore F. Davidson, on Jan-

uary 13, 1881, introduced the bill which duly became law, authorizing the publication of the records. The next Legislature enlarged the plan by authorizing the collection of material not in the possession of the State, and under this authority Colonel Saunders secured the services of Mr. W. Noel Sainsbury of the British Public Records Office, through whose work a mass of valuable material was obtained.

The contents of the Colonial Records are too well known to require comment here. But mention must be made of the devotion of their editor, who now undertook a monumental task for which he had no other equipment than a fine mind, capacity for unremitting toil, and unbounded love for his State. Crippled by rheumatism and wounds, suffering intense pain a greater part of the time, he put nearly eleven years of his life into the ten volumes which are his everlasting monument. As Alfred M. Waddell expressed it, "It was done with a true and loving hand, under the inspiration of a brave and loyal heart, without the least expectation or hope of reward of any kind, and solely for the honor of the State which gave him birth, and the people to whose welfare he devoted all the years of his life."

After the completion of the Colonial Records and the death of Colonel Saunders which occurred soon thereafter, the work on the records stopped. In 1895 Judge Walter Clark, at the request of the trustees of the State Library, assumed the position of editor, and with interest and industry equal to that of Colonel Saunders, carried on the work. Sixteen volumes more were added, dealing with the period from 1776 to 1790. In 1914 a comprehensive index in four volumes, prepared by Dr. Stephen B. Weeks, was published also.

Interest in the State in things historical was by this time growing. The number of North Carolinians engaged seriously or for recreation in historical investigation was steadily increasing. With the Colonial and State Records available it was possible to reconstruct much of the past. As people grew more familiar with the past, their interest in it increased. Finding much that was creditable in the State's history, and a good deal that was heroic, they began to conquer the inferiority complex from which they had suffered so



long. And all this prepared the way for the next and most important step which the State would make in preserving its records of the past.

During the session of the Legislature of 1903, Mr. William J. Peele, who had long been an enthusiastic student of North Carolina history, wrote a bill providing for the creation of an historical commission. He worked to arouse interest among the members and his task proved unexpectedly easy. The bill became law. It was very simple. It established the Historical Commission "whose duty it shall be to have collected from the files of old newspapers, from court records, church records, and elsewhere, valuable documents pertaining to the history of the State." The Commission was to consist of five members, appointed by the governor for a term of two years, and serving without salary, mileage, or *per diem*. The Commission was authorized to expend not more than five hundred dollars annually in the collection and copying of documents which when collected and approved, were to be published by the state printer as public printing.

To the Commission, Governor Aycock appointed W. J. Peele, of Raleigh, J. D. Hufham, of Henderson, F. A. Sondley, of Asheville, Richard Dillard, of Edenton, and R. D. W. Connor, of Wilmington. Owing to the distance which separated the members there was difficulty in securing a quorum for the purpose of organization. Mr. Peele and Mr. Connor met twice in Raleigh, but for the lack of a third were unable to organize. Finally, in November, Mr. Peele learned that Dr. Hufham would be in Warsaw on November 20th. He communicated with Mr. Connor, and the two went to Warsaw and, gathering in Dr. Hufham, they effected an organization by electing Mr. Peele, Chairman, and Mr. Connor, Secretary. This was the only meeting that was held in the two years of the first term.

The Governor, realizing the necessity of having members nearer to Raleigh, in 1905 appointed W. J. Peele, J. Bryan Grimes, and R. D. W. Connor of Raleigh, Thomas W. Blount of Roper, and C. L. Raper of Chapel Hill. Mr. Peele was again chosen Chairman, and Mr. Connor Secretary. Meetings were now a possibility and some work of importance was accomplished, but it was apparent that if work on any large scale and on a consistent plan were to be prosecuted successfully, a different organization and more generous sup-

port were necessary. Accordingly Mr. Connor prepared the bill which was passed into law by the Legislature of 1907, and under which the Commission has operated ever since.

Under the provisions of the new law the term of the members was increased to six years, the terms of no more than two expiring in any one year. The Commission was given an annual appropriation of five thousand dollars, and was empowered to employ a full-time secretary. An office in the Capitol was assigned to it. Two significant paragraphs show the broadened scope of its purposes and powers:

Sec. 2. It shall be the duty of the Commission to have collected from the files of old newspapers, court records, church records, private collections, and elsewhere, historical data pertaining to the history of North Carolina and the territory included therein from the earliest times; to have such material properly edited, published by the State Printer as other State printing, and distributed under the direction of the Commission; to care for the proper marking and preservation of battle-fields, houses and other places celebrated in the history of the State; to diffuse knowledge in reference to the history and resources of North Carolina; to encourage the study of North Carolina history in the schools of the State, and to stimulate and encourage historical investigation and research among the people of the State; to make a biennial report of its receipts and disbursements, its work and needs, to the Governor, to be by him transmitted to the General Assembly; and said Commission is especially charged with the duty of coöperating with the Commission appointed by the Governor to make an exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition, in making at said exposition an historical exhibit illustrating the history of North Carolina from the earliest times.

Sec. 5. Any state, county, town or other public official in custody of public documents is hereby authorized and empowered in his discretion to turn over to said Commission for preservation any official books, records, documents, original papers, newspaper files, printed books or portraits not in current use in his office, and said Commission shall provide for their permanent preservation; and when so surrendered, copies therefrom shall be made and certified under the seal of the Commission upon application of any person, which certification shall have the same force and effect as if made by the officer originally in charge of them, and the Commission shall charge for such copies the same fees as said officer is by law allowed to charge, to be collected in advance.

Governor Glenn, under the new law, appointed J. Bryan Grimes, W. J. Peele, Thomas W. Blount, M. C. S. Noble, and D. H. Hill. On May 20, 1907, the first meeting in the life of the Commission, at which every member was present was held in Raleigh. The new

Commission organized by the election of J. Bryan Grimes as Chairman; and R. D. W. Connor was elected to fill the new post of Secretary which the Commission now created.

During the existence of the Commission since its reorganization, the following have served as members:

J. Bryan Grimes, 1907-1923; Chairman, 1907-1923.  
 W. J. Peele, 1907-1919.  
 Thomas W. Blount, 1907-1911.  
 M. C. S. Noble, 1907-  
 D. H. Hill, 1907-1921.  
 Thomas M. Pittman, 1911-; Chairman 1923-  
 Frank Wood, 1919-1925.  
 Heriot Clarkson, 1921-  
 W. N. Everett, 1923-  
 Ben Dixon MacNeill, 1925-

The secretaries have been:

R. D. W. Connor, 1907-1921.  
 D. H. Hill, 1921-1924.  
 R. B. House, 1924-1926.  
 A. R. Newsome, 1926-

Of the members of the Commission, Peele, Grimes, Blount, and Wood died in office, and Hill resigned to become Secretary. Of the secretaries, Mr. Connor resigned to become Kenan Professor of History and Government in the University of North Carolina; D. H. Hill died in office; and Mr. House resigned to become Executive Secretary of the University of North Carolina.

The appropriation for the support of the Commission, beginning at five thousand dollars, increased until it reached in 1923-1924 thirty thousand dollars.

Mr. Connor entered upon his work as Secretary with enthusiasm. A devoted student of history in its larger aspects, he had been for years familiarizing himself with the history of North Carolina. During his service of four years on the Commission he had studied carefully the problem of what was most needed for the preservation of the records of that history and when he drew the bill of 1907 he had taken care that it should contain all necessary authority for the work and that it should establish no mere department of archives, valuable as such an institution undoubtedly is, nor yet a genealogical laboratory. He had a clear conception of a state agency

which should be no mere repository of dry official records, but rather a dynamic force in the reconstruction of the past of the State, an educational agency of high importance which would not only serve as a means of unlocking the doors of the past but would also teach the much needed lesson that history is always in the making in order that never again could the reproach be hurled at the State that it had no care for the story of its life.

Nor was his conception of history of a sort to deserve the taunting epithet of Henry Ford. History was to him no empty record of wars and battles, political campaigns and official administrations. It included all of that, but it was far more. His view was as broad as James Harvey Robinson's description of it as the record "of everything that man has ever seen, thought, felt or done." It was a record of growth; and his ideal was the ultimate picturing of the past in its every aspect—political, yes, but also religious, industrial, economic, and social. He aspired that the Historical Commission, by serving the investigator, should play a large part in making this possible; not less he aspired to make it of equal value to the mass of North Carolinians whose interest in history is of quite a different sort.

He had studied and was familiar with the problems, organization, and methods of similar institutions, and slowly, at first, and carefully, he began the work, choosing from the other systems those practices best suited to local needs, but with the boldness characteristic of the man, never hesitating to cut new paths where there was promise of better results. At all times he sought to make the work of the Commission go much further than mere justification of its foundation and continued existence. Steadily he broadened its usefulness and popularized it not only by preaching its gospel but by making it in an incredibly short space of time indispensable, until in the minds of the people its work came to be regarded as a proper function of government.

As time passed and larger means became available, the scope of its work was widened. When the Commission came into its new and splendidly equipped home—a home which Mr. Connor's work had done much to make possible—it had an established and deserved reputation at home, and was well and favorably known outside the limits of the State. Mr. Connor established for it helpful contacts

with such institutions as the Congressional Library, the Carnegie Foundation, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Wisconsin Historical Society; and within a few years, by achievement alone, the Commission was ranked by experts as among the three or four best of such agencies in the United States, a position which it still maintains. By its publications, by its collection of material, and by the facilities it offered to investigators, it gave to North Carolina history a new position in the eyes of the world.

During this time Mr. Connor was building up and training an expert staff whose work deserves high praise and whose enthusiasm is an asset not lightly to be regarded.

Mr. Connor had valuable assistance in the accomplishment of his great achievement. The members of the Commission, never conceiving their task as one of direction, at all times gave him, along with a free hand, their loyal support. Those interested in the history of the State stood with him also. The succeeding secretaries have each made certain contributions. But the achievement is his. The Commission as it stands today is the child of his brain and is his personal creation.

The first of the public archives which came into the custody of the Commission was the Executive Correspondence. The letter books were in the Governor's office; but the thousands of letters were piled in an attic exposed to the weather, in danger of fire, and at the mercy of the light-fingered. These were rescued, classified, mended and restored, and indexed. The letter books were soon turned over as well. A few years later, the legislative papers, preserved carelessly and without arrangement, were transferred to the custody of the Commission. In the course of time papers from other State offices were transferred in large part and were classified and arranged for use.

In 1917 a systematic effort was begun to induce the counties to take advantage of that provision of the law which allowed the transfer to the Commission of such records as were not in current use. Today sixty counties have records in greater or less number in the collections in Raleigh. They include minutes of the county courts, marriage bonds, wills, grants, deeds, land entries, inventories of estates, tax lists, and the like. They comprise more than one thousand volumes and cases and there are several hundred thousand

separate documents. The counties which have joined in this are: Ashe, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Brunswick, Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Camden, Carteret, Caswell, Chatham, Chowan, Columbus, Cumberland, Currituck, Duplin, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gates, Guilford, Granville, Halifax, Haywood, Hertford, Hyde, Jackson, Johnston, Jones, Lenoir, McDowell, Martin, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Nash, New Hanover, Northampton, Onslow, Orange, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Polk, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Rutherford, Surry, Stokes, Tyrrell, Wake, Washington, Wayne, Wilkes, Yadkin. The records of Albemarle and Bute counties, both extinct, are also in the collection.

Among the most valuable historical papers in the hands of the Commission are the collections of private papers of public men. These have been repaired and bound, and calendars have been made to facilitate their use. Among the large and more important are: Charles B. Aycock, John H. Bryan, W. H. S. Burgwyn, Walter Clark, William A. Graham, Bryan Grimes, E. J. Hale, Thomas D. Hogg, Charles E. Johnson, Willie P. Mangum, Archibald D. Murphey, J. J. Pettigrew, David S. Reid, Thomas Ruffin, Randolph A. Shotwell, Cornelia Phillips Spencer, D. L. Swain, George W. Swepson, John Steele, Zebulon B. Vance, Calvin H. Wiley, and Jonathan Worth.

In 1922 the Commission sent Mr. Connor to England to make a report on North Carolina material in the Public Records Office, and in the British Museum, which had not been secured by Colonel Saunders or Judge Clark. He reported the existence of a vast amount of North Carolina material of four kinds: 1. Documents dealing directly with North Carolina and North Carolinians; 2. Documents bearing upon territory formerly but not now embraced within the limits of North Carolina; 3. Documents dealing with matters of common interest to all the American colonies, or to two or more including North Carolina, but which do not refer to specific colonies; and 4. Documents concerning individuals connected with the history of North Carolina, but concerning them either before such connection began or after it ceased. As a result of this report, the Commission has begun to have copies made of these papers, which promise much fresh light on the colonial history of North Carolina and of

several other states, and the inauguration of a new series of Colonial Records.

In 1925 Mr. William W. Pierson, Jr., of the University of North Carolina, on behalf of the Commission, made a similar investigation of the Spanish Archives and more than ten thousand photostatic sheets and five thousand typed sheets of North Carolina material have been secured.

Very early in the life of the Commission, the policy was adopted of securing copies from other collections of letters and other documents. Transcripts have been made, among others, from the papers of Lord Dartmouth, the letters of James Murray in the Massachusetts Historical Society, the papers of Richard Henderson in the Wisconsin Historical Society, the George C. Thomas collection of letters of delegates to the Continental Congress and the Federal Convention, and the collection of papers in the library at "Hayes" near Edenton.

During the World War the Commission took preliminary steps for preserving the record of the State's participation. In 1919, under authority of a law enacted that year, Mr. R. B. House, a veteran of the war, was chosen Collector of World War Records. His work resulted during the two following years in the collection and preservation of more than one hundred thousand documents, official and personal, covering almost every phase of the subject which concerns the State.

There are now in the manuscript collections of the Commission almost a million separate documents besides the bound volumes of county records.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission never has made any attempt to collect newspapers, recognizing that as one of the responsibilities of the State Library.

<sup>1</sup> Some idea of the sheer bulk of these records can be gained from the following table:

	Boxes	Volumes as received	Volumes of MSS. repaired and bound	Total
Marriage Bonds	624			624
County Record	206	406	82	694
Executive Papers	304			304
Governors' Letter Books	7	108		115
Governors' Papers			71	71
World War Records	400	18		418
Legislative Papers	852			852
Land Records	63	32		95
Private Collections	277	2	104	383
Miscellaneous	437	391	73	901
	<u>3170</u>	<u>957</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>4457</u>

But, as incidental to its other work, it has received files, more or less complete, of the *Fayetteville Observer*, *Chatham Record*; the *Sentinel*, *Standard*, *Register*, *State Journal*, *Conservative*, *Progress*, and *Confederate*, of Raleigh; the *Review*, *Journal*, *Star*, and *Post*, of Wilmington; the *Richmond Sentinel*; *Richmond Enquirer*; and the *National Intelligencer*.

It has also had copied from newspapers of other states, published before 1800, all items relating to North Carolina and it is securing photostatic copies of all North Carolina newspapers, published before 1800, which are in collections in the United States. This work is still being done and is among the most valuable things accomplished by the Commission. Among these papers are: *Edenton Intelligencer*, *North Carolina Gazette*, *State Gazette of North Carolina*, *North Carolina Chronicle*, *Wilmington Sentinel and General Advertiser*, *Cape Fear Mercury*, *North Carolina Journal*, *Washington Federalist*, *Martin's North Carolina Gazette*, *The Newbern Gazette*, *The North Carolina Minerva and Fayetteville Advertiser*, *The North Carolina Sentinel and Fayetteville Gazette*, *The North Carolina Chronicle or Fayetteville Gazette*, *Fayetteville Gazette*, *Hull's Wilmington Gazette*, *The Wilmington Gazette*, *The Wilmington Chronicle*, *The Wilmington Sentinel*, *Edenton Intelligencer*, *The North Carolina Minerva*, *The North Carolina Gazette*, *The North Carolina Mercury*.

In caring for its manuscript collections the Commission has developed an excellent system of restoration, repair, and binding. This arrangement is a fine combination of accessibility to the investigator and care for their preservation.

From the beginning the Commission has planned an extensive publication program. In 1907 it published a volume, edited by W. J. Peele and Clarence Poe, entitled *Literary and Historical Activities in North Carolina, 1900-1905*. It has issued a series of thirty-two bulletins containing its biennial reports, certain important addresses and short monographs, and the proceedings of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association. It has issued biennially a legislative manual which has proved of great service immediately upon its issue and forms today a most valuable collection of source material. In 1913 this handbook, compiled and edited by R. D. W. Connor, took the form of an elaborate historical manual



of the government of North Carolina and the officers who have administered it.

In 1924 the Commission established the *North Carolina Historical Review* with Secretary House as managing editor. In 1925 a board of editors was organized, consisting of R. D. W. Connor, W. C. Jackson, and Charles L. Coon, with Secretary House as managing editor. From the first the policy of paying liberally for contributions was adopted. The *Review* quickly took high rank among publications of similar character.

In addition to the publications described the Commission has begun the publication of an elaborate series of volumes of source material. The following titles indicate their character: *Documentary History of Public Education in North Carolina, 1790-1840*, 2 vols., compiled and edited by Charles L. Coon; *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, 2 vols., edited by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton; *The Papers of Archibald D. Murphy*, 2 vols, edited by William Henry Hoyt; *North Carolina Schools and Academies, 1790-1840; A Documentary History*, edited by Charles L. Coon; *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 4 vols., edited by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton; *De Graffenried's Account of the Founding of New Bern*, edited by Vincent H. Todd in coöperation with Julius Goebel; *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 2 vols., edited by Adelaide L. Fries; *The papers of John Steele*, 2 vols., edited by H. M. Wagstaff; *Calendars of Manuscript Collections*, by D. L. Corbitt.

When the Commission moved in 1914 to its present home, it requested that the historical material in the Hall of History be transferred to its care, which was accordingly done. The Hall of History was the work of Colonel Fred A. Olds who for many years had assiduously collected from every quarter of the State historical relics, many of the highest importance and value. Animated by an untiring zeal and patriotic devotion, and serving without salary or other compensation, without even payment of his expenses, he had brought together a collection of several thousand objects of historical interest. These were now transferred to the Commission's new quarters and arranged in two great display rooms. Colonel Olds was elected Collector for the Hall of History. From that time the work has been carried on without interruption and with increasing success. The Jule Carr Research Fund of five hundred dollars annually en-

abled even greater activity and the collection is today one of the best in the country. It is visited annually by thousands and has been a powerful influence in popularizing the work of the Commission.

The Commission has not contented itself with the activities just described. It has sought to promote the erection of memorials of various sorts. It began this work by placing in the rotunda of the Capitol a bust of William A. Graham. In a short time busts of John M. Morehead, Samuel Johnston, and Matt W. Ransom were presented to the State and placed in the rotunda. It made contributions to several of these, and to the bust of William Gaston and the bronze statue of Thomas Ruffin which are in the State Administration Building.

Upon the request of the Commission, the Legislature of 1917 appropriated \$2,500, annually to be used by the Commission to aid in marking historic sites and events in North Carolina. The Commission was authorized to appropriate not more than \$100 to any one marker, the aid being contingent upon a similar amount being raised by the county commissioners or private citizens of any county in which the place to be marked is located. The Commission had prepared a striking and dignified design for the markers. The Legislature of 1919 continued the appropriation and more than fifty places have been thus marked.

The Legislature of 1915 established a Legislative Reference Library, and placed it under the supervision of the Historical Commission. W. S. Wilson was elected librarian. In the three years which followed, he made the office in the words of Mr. Connor, "not only indispensable to the General Assembly, but generally one of the most useful departments of the State government. His success was due to the fact that he carried into his office a spirit of service which he refused to permit to be deadened by the letter of the law. If he referred frequently to the law creating his department it was not for the purpose of finding therein restrictions upon his activities or excuses to plead against his being required to do this or that task, but for the purpose of finding authority for entering broader fields of activity, developing new lines of usefulness, and opening new doors of service, and such authority he never failed to find." Mr. Wilson died in 1918 and in 1919 Mr. H. M. London succeeded him, under whom the work has been since carried on.

This account of the Commission's work would not be complete without specific mention of its importance to the steadily increasing number of investigators who use its collections, of its value to the institutions of higher learning in the State, particularly in connection with their graduate work and of the daily service it performs for citizens of North Carolina and of other states who in increasing numbers turn to it for aid and information. No matter from what angle one approaches any field of North Carolina, ready, interested, and, highly efficient service is at command.

The foregoing sketch of the development of the State's policy in respect to the preservation of historical material shows clearly a fairly uninterrupted movement which reached a climax in the creation of the Historical Commission. It marks the development in the State of a healthy self-consciousness, a just pride in the past, accompanied, fortunately, by the growth of a spirit which permits fearless investigation, scientific analysis and criticism, and the free publication of conclusions. It is not unconnected with certain aspects of life and thought in the State which give comfort to thoughtful observers. More and more there is acceptance of the gospel that in the truth alone lies perfect freedom.